

Never Forget

9-11-01

“Never forget” has special meaning to all of us, just as 9-11 itself has special meaning to all of us. We are commanding ourselves to never forget the sacrifices that those brave souls made to rescue those trapped in the twin towers or hoping against hope that somehow there were survivors following the collapse. We are commanding ourselves always to be vigilant knowing that there are fierce and determined enemies of our Nation who will attack us unprovoked only because we are who we are and hold our democratic way of life dear. We are commanding ourselves to remember those who perished and their families and friends whose anguish is unfathomable. And for those of us who lived through the terrorist attack it sharply recalls exactly where we were, who we were with and what we saw and did – all indelibly etched into our minds. At the time I was working in Manhattan in a tall office building at the corner of Third and 42nd a couple of blocks from the United Nations. We had one of the top floors with a bank of windows facing south with an unobstructed view to the tip of Manhattan Island. It was a crisp and crystal clear day starting out as a beautiful morning. I recall someone shouting out that one of the towers had been hit with reports were that it was a light plane that was off course and struck one of the upper floors of one of the towers. We immediately stopped and gathered at the windows gazing south. There were conflicting news reports coming in. It was one of my fellow senior attorneys who grimly announced, “It’s a terrorist attack. It has to be.” The rest of us couldn’t accept that explanation until the second plane struck and news cascaded out that indeed it was a terrorist attack with more coming. As heard the reports of the plane hitting the Pentagon and the plane that due to the unimaginable bravery of the passengers, crashed into a field in Pennsylvania rather than hitting its target in Washington. We didn’t know the extent to which our entire Nation was under attack. We stood quietly numb, still disbelieving the horror, as we witnessed each tower one by one collapsing into a smoking heap. Being several miles from the towers and with the thick windows encasing our floor, the sound of each collapse did not reach us. It was as though all of it was an unreal, dark nightmare. Coming to our battered senses, we asked ourselves what could we do to help? We had no idea that those who didn’t escape before the collapse did not survive. We had heard something about the Red Cross setting up a blood drive someplace on the Upper East Side. A number of us went out and wandered a bit, found the line that stretched for blocks but were told that we should come back in a couple of weeks because they simply couldn’t handle all the donors. We heard the sirens of firetrucks and ambulances streaming down the East River Drive and the Henry Hudson Parkway to the tragic scene to help in any way they could. It began to sink in that it was all too real.

We all remember in our own way. But for all of us whatever the meaning, let us never forget.